



PLANNING/DESIGN AND
ACCESS STATEMENT

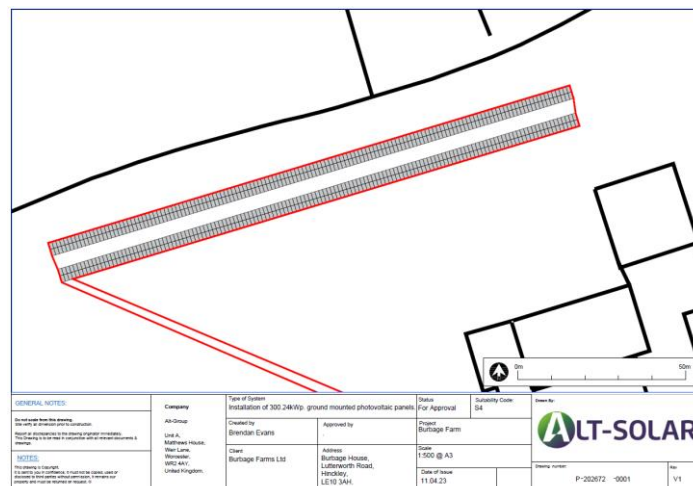
**Planning application for the erection
of a 301.32Kw ground mounted
solar array and all associated works
at:**

**Burbage House
Lutterworth Road
Hinckley
LE10 3AH**

Burbage Farm Ltd – Mr Keith Wells

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Site Selection

The Applicant's site requirements for a 301.32kW solar array, based on technical and operational requirements have informed the site selection process. The Application Site meets these requirements in the following respects:

- Sunlight intensity levels – the site is well located geographically for solar gain, is flat and free of landscape features that could cause overshadowing
- Grid connection - proximity of a site to a sub-station that has capacity is essential
- The solar array will utilise an existing export/import grid connection
- Good road access for construction/routine maintenance and eventual decommissioning
- The site benefits from excellent access from the existing farm drive

Benefits

The indirect benefits of the scheme include the following:

Environmental Benefits

- Reducing carbon emissions – in the long term, reduced carbon emissions are expected to contribute to a deceleration in the rate of global climate change
- Air quality improvements; renewable energy proposals have indirect benefits in this regard through the contribution to reduced fossil fuel emissions
- As the site is changing from a single annual crop to being sown with wild flower/pollinator mixes, an improved environment for flora and fauna can be expected

Economic Benefits

- Reduce reliance on expensive predominantly fossil fuel derived imported electricity
- Job creation: direct (e.g. construction of, management and operational maintenance of solar energy generating installations) and indirect (e.g. making components for renewable installations) and induced economic multiplier effects (e.g. re-circulating income in local area)
- Increased security and reliability of supply: through more distributed generation closer to the point of use, less power wastage in transmission over long distances, more diverse sources and technology types, domestically available fuels
- Economic gains or penalties may soon be linked to the farms carbon balance. The farm is working towards carbon negativity and this development will take them further down that road

4. Farm Diversification and support

The DEFRA definition of a diversified enterprise is:

'The entrepreneurial use of farm resources for a non-agricultural purpose for commercial gain' Under this definition, activities such as non-agricultural contracting, the letting of buildings for non-agricultural purposes, processing and retailing of farm produce, using farm resources for tourism, sport and recreational activities would be included as diversification. On-site energy generation which either offsets on-site use or is exported to the grid is also considered to be a diversification activity.

Farm diversification is of increasing importance to those with an interest in agriculture and rural communities as a whole. With rising uncertainty in farming, diversification offers a way of supplementing incomes and improving the economic viability of a farm business.

Diversification reflects the reduced dependence of farmers on agriculture as a source of income. Diversification also implies some kind of entrepreneurial activity on behalf of the farmer.

The proposal is a farm diversification scheme. The business wishes to further improve the sustainability of the farm to ensure they are utilising available resources to provide renewable energy, together with gaining an additional farm income by reducing the reliance on imported electricity and for the future proofing of the business against future raises in electricity tariff. The farm's proposal is supported by National, Regional and Local planning policy.

The generation of renewable electricity through the operation of the proposed solar scheme would benefit the applicant and help secure the future of the family farm.

Business Assessment

Pressure Faced by Farming Businesses

British agriculture has been under significant pressure over many years. Farms without diversification projects or other external incomes are struggling to survive and indeed many thousands have left the industry. The solar development will cement the renewable energy base and provides increased strength and stability to the core business.

Carbon Footprint

This solar array will further drive the business down this track to the benefit of us all as we strive to combat the negative effects of climate change. The solar array will produce enough renewable energy to counter 66,588 kg of CO₂ emissions per annum.

Proposed Usage

The solar array will produce 285,914 kWh of renewable energy per annum which will be used to reduce the farming business electricity requirement and export surplus to the national grid.

Energy Crisis

Since the beginning of this year the UK have seen the price of energy rises dramatically from several political events occurring. This has caused widespread fuel poverty throughout the UK. Most energy bills have risen by 54%. Through producing energy through renewable energy especially in the UK it will mean the UK will eventually become self-sufficient, as well as reducing the cost of importing energy from other countries.

5. Site and Surrounding Area

Location

The Application Site is located south of the town of Burbage.

Tree Preservation Orders and Landscape Designations

There are no Tree Preservation Orders or Landscape Designations which effect the Application Site or the surrounding area.

Historic Environment and Heritage Assets

A search for scheduled monuments and listed buildings within a 500m radius has been carried out. The Application Site is not within close proximity to and listed buildings or scheduled monuments.

Ecological Designations and Habitats

A desktop survey of the area within a 500m radius of the Application site has been carried out using Magic Map. The survey covers Important Bird Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation and National Nature Reserves within the search area. The Application Site is not subject to any ecological designation.

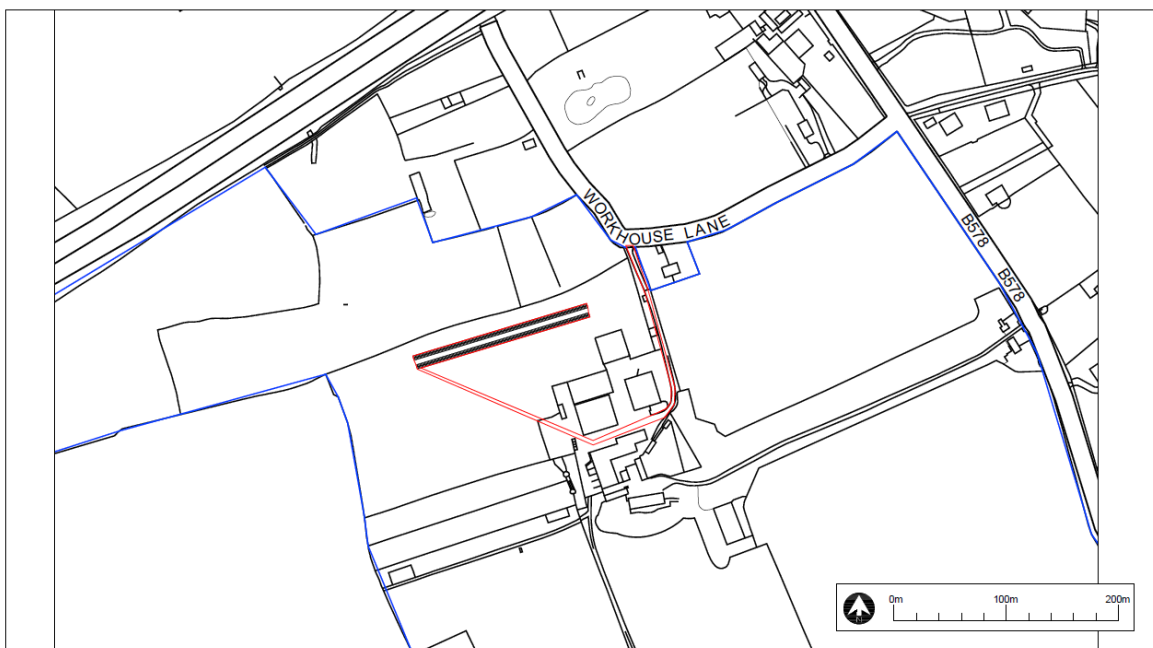
Flood Risk

With regard to the action of surface water draining off, around the PV's individually and as a whole, it is acknowledged that water would run off the lower edge of each of the PV's and through the gaps. Run off from the proposed development is unlikely to affect any roads locally.

In light of the above, it is considered that the proposed development would be at a no risk of flooding, and it would not exacerbate the risk of flooding elsewhere or surface water run-off.

6. Proposed Development

The proposal is for the installation of a 301.32kW ground mounted solar array. The Proposed development will include a ground mounted mounting system which are attached to the PV panels.



The use of land in the countryside for the production of energy is consistent with tradition and practice going back many centuries. Woodland has been planted as fuel for heating and oats have been grown to feed workhorses. In the last century crops such as oil seed rape and wheat have been grown to produce biofuels.

The site is to be laid out as per the Site Layout Plan and will include the following elements:

- 301.32kw solar photovoltaic arrays
- Underground cable installed parallel to the existing access track to connect to the existing export connection

The UK imports both food and fuel and security of supply is a consideration in relation to both. The use of farmland for energy production will contribute to the UK's energy security and will allow a reduction in reliance on fossil fuels.

Layout

Solar Arrays – Solar panels will be fixed on metal frames attached to the ground by shallow piles driven 1.2m into the ground.

The frames will be orientated to face south in rows approximately 5 meters apart with a tilt related to the latitude of the site and therefore its angle according to the sun.

The panels will be 1m above ground level and the finished height of the PV modules will be approximately 3 meters above ground level. (Refer to drawing for site layout/side elevation)

Inverters will be mounted directly on the framework and positioned at the end of each run of panels.

Lighting – No permanent lighting is proposed.

Access tracks – Existing track will be used

Construction

The total construction period is typically 6 weeks. The materials will be stored off site and will be transported at phased intervals during the construction period to control vehicle movements.

Grid Connection

No upgrade to the grid network is required for the site to connect to the Grid. The site will connect to the existing on-site infrastructure. The connection will be approved by the Distribution Network Operator.

Access

Access to the Application Site would be through an existing farm access.

During the construction phase it is anticipated that approximately 4 two-way lorry movements will be generated delivering materials. The PVs would be offloaded using an all-terrain fork lift. The proposed vehicle movements created by the day-to-day operation of the proposed unit would be minimal.

It is expected that the construction of the solar array would result in no material impact on the local highway network.

After commissioning, there will be approximately three visits to the site per year for maintenance and these would be made by van or 4x4 type vehicle. In addition there will be a need for 4-6 visits per year for ground maintenance.

Landscaping

The site is screened by existing boundary trees and hedge rows. To reduce any visual impact, the layout and siting of the PV's has been designed to cause minimal impact within the landscape.

7. Planning Local Policy

National Planning Policy – NPPF - Delivering Sustainable Development

Section 3, paragraph 28 - Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy

Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

Support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
Promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
Support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres; and Promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

8. Planning Policy Assessment

At all levels of planning policy making there is a strong commitment to generate energy from renewable sources.

The acceptability of the Proposed Development is therefore influenced most by the details of the proposal and its associated impacts.

In summary, the planning considerations for a solar development are identified below and considered in turn:

- The principle of the development
- Landscape and visual impacts
- Nature conservation and biodiversity
- Historic environment and heritage assets
- Residential amenity
- The highway network and access

The Principle of the Development

The Application Site is not in the countryside where new development is strictly controlled.

The Application Site is technically suitable for this renewable energy proposal being open and level, without major overshadowing from buildings, other structures or trees and being sited close to a suitable National Grid connection point that has capacity.

It has no environmental designations or constraints and is capable of being used as grassland habitat during and after its solar development use. It is considered that this is an appropriate location for this type of development and that it complies with the relevant criteria of policies.

Landscape and Visual Impacts

It is identified that visibility of the proposed site is largely limited to views when on or very close to the Application Site. Views from other nearby receptors are largely prevented by the Application Site's mature boundaries and other boundaries further out from the site.

Views from more distant locations to the application site are prevented by intervening vegetation and topography.

It is felt that there would not be any significant effects to the landscape character of the surrounding area.

The visual impacts are limited by the visual containment provided by existing hedges and existing buildings along the application site's boundaries. The closest range visual impacts would be from the road which runs to the east of the site.

It is concluded that the Proposed Development would not have a materially significant adverse landscape or visual impact on either the surrounding landscape character or from the visual receptors identified, visual and landscape impacts would not be of significant impact. Thus the proposed development complies with criteria of policy.

Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

The Application Site is not the subject of any nature conservation designation nor is it close to any designated site that could be affected by the Proposed Development.

The proposed development also includes the retention of all other boundaries of the site which act as an important habitat corridor between the boundaries of the site.

Historic Environment, Heritage Assets and Archaeology

The proposal will have a positive effect in relation to climate change which is supported by a heritage assessment.

Residential Amenity

In considering if the proposed development would have an adverse impact on residential amenity, the key potential impacts are identified as the visual impact and this is considered above.

The Highway Network and Access

The construction of the solar development would result in the temporary generation of construction and staff related vehicle trips over a 3 week construction period. The site benefits from excellent access from the existing farm drive. Construction vehicles will use this existing access, which is suitable to accommodate their movements then use the existing farm tracks to access the Application Site.

9. Conclusion

There is a need, both nationally and regionally, for additional renewable energy generating infrastructure if the country is to meet its commitments to reducing CO2 emissions.

The proposed development would make a significant contribution to meeting the region's targets for reducing CO2 emissions and to increasing the supply of secure, renewable energy. Government policy and guidance recognises that there are many issues that influence the choice of site for such proposals and requires that LPAs should not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable energy and its distribution.

Government planning policy on the provision of renewable energy generation facilities explicitly supports the principle of providing such development.

The proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the related LPA policy documents and is also in accordance with relevant Development Plan policies.

The proposed development would have positive benefits in that it will make a valuable contribution to cutting carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions arising from energy generation and so assist in meeting regional, national and International targets for CO2 reduction through increasing energy supply from renewable sources.

The development would also support farm diversification and help to create and retain jobs in the existing farm business.

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